

### Women and Employment

Kucharova, Vera

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Kucharova, V. (1999). Women and Employment. *Sociologický časopis / Czech Sociological Review*, 7(2), 179-194.  
<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-54424>

#### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

#### Terms of use:

This document is made available under Deposit Licence (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

---

## Women and Employment

VĚRA KUCHAROVÁ\*

Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, Prague

**Abstract:** This paper is based on the results of the research project “The Status of Women and Men in the Czech Republic” from 1998. It was inspired by the need to obtain information on the circumstances of enforcement of EU legislation on equal opportunities in the Czech Republic in connection with the Czech Republic’s application for EU membership. The project aimed to investigate the public perception and consciousness of equal opportunities. Therefore, it deals with the main issues of the EU directives and recommendations: equal pay, equal treatment as regards access to employment, promotion and vocational training, legal knowledge concerning employment and so on. Reconciling family and working life is the crucial problem in the Czech Republic, as in other countries. It can be understood as a result of both modernisation and the special national situation that has resulted from the social and economic transition. The paper compares conditions of women’s employment with their professional expectations and satisfaction. It shows the social determination of these, and some stereotypes in understanding men’s and women’s roles. These facts influence women’s position on the labour market in various aspects.

*Czech Sociological Review*, 1999, Vol. 7 (No. 2: 179-194)

Employment is not merely a source of income and of personal satisfaction, but also an important field for the formation of social relations between individuals and one of the factors that determines social status [Čermáková 1995: 12, Šanderová 1998: 149]. Work has a somewhat different role in the life of women than of men, even if the basic self-realisation (to use one’s abilities, to be independent, to share in a joint project, to do something useful) and instrumental (to earn a living or to be financially independent) needs are more or less common to both genders. The basic difference lies in the place that a person’s profession and work holds both in determining the social status of women in comparison with men, and in confrontation with women’s other roles and aspiration, primarily in the family.

The need (or necessity) of women to be part of the public work sphere is shown by their continuing high level of employment in the post-communist countries and the rising level of female employment in western countries.<sup>1</sup> The actual situation may differ according to its origins and development (e.g. the structure of female employment, the specific level of employment by age and marital status, the percentage of women in part-time employment). In balancing their maternal (partnership) and professional roles, a steadily increasing number of women (mostly young and well-qualified) are placing greater importance on the latter. This can be explained by the rising professional ambitions of in-

---

\*) Direct all correspondence to: PhDr. Věra Kuchařová, CSc., Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, Palackého náměstí 4, 128 01 Praha 2, fax +420 2 24 97 28 73, e-mail rilsa@ecn.cz

<sup>1</sup>) In EU countries women made up 30% of the workforce in 1970, and 45% in 1995. In the Czech Republic in mid-1998 the figure was 43% [*Equal...* 1996, *Zaměstnanost...* 1998]. The comparison between the EU and the Czech Republic is complicated by the fact that the majority of women here work full-time.

creasingly educated women, by the increased demands on professions and by uncertainty on the job market, but also by the lack of support in combining the two. It is virtually impossible to eliminate the conflict between these two aspects since it is an expression both of subjective needs and of socio-culturally and economically determined conditions. For this reason, this conflict cannot be entirely disregarded in any study of female unemployment.

In this article I would like to sketch out the broad outlines of the question of female employment, principally on the basis of data collected in the survey *The Position of Men and Women* (MW98) [Kuchařová and Zamykalová 1998]<sup>2</sup> in comparison with other research and statistical surveys. The main questions in considering the selected aspects of women's employment were as follows: What role does work have in women's lives in terms of their position and of combining work and family? How do the approaches of men and women to their professional position differ and what effect does this have? Have women gained or lost in the field of work and employment during the process of transformation? To what extent is there (conscious) discrimination against women in the work arena?

### Employment and Education

The high level of women's employment common in previous decades has been carried over into the 1990s. While it fell slightly after 1989, it has remained around 52% in recent years. The fall can be attributed to a lower level of employment of young women due to prolonged maternity leave, and among older women to the fall in the number of people continuing to work after retirement age, and also to the higher level of unemployment in general. There has also been a slight rise in the number of housewives. In general, however, the main features of the relatively high female employment are still present: women's high level of qualifications and their interest in working, employers' willingness to employ female employees, the fact that most families need two (or more) incomes to survive, women's social-psychological motivation to work (as a means of gaining independence and social contacts, as well as of maintaining their social status) [c.f. Čermáková 1995]. The situation is slowly changing. The need imposed by the labour market for constantly improving qualifications is more difficult for women, as is the demand for increased mobility. Interrupting a career to look after children is becoming an even greater obstacle for women on the labour market. Employment opportunities for women are becoming increasingly dependent on their age, family situation and education<sup>3</sup> and on the relation between these. On the other hand, women in the Czech Republic have be-

---

<sup>2</sup>) The survey *Postavení žen a mužů v ČR 1998* [The Position of Women and Men in the Czech Republic 1998] (referred to in the text as MW98) was carried out using a quota sample of 1000 respondents – 602 women and 398 men aged 20-60, distributed by regions. It was decided not to have the sample representative by sex (since we wanted a larger sample of women so as to be able to classify them more precisely) and the young and middle-aged groups were slightly larger (as we presumed that they would be more sensitive and concerned about "the woman question"), which influenced the distribution by education. The influence of these indicators was of course determined for each subject or indicator studied [*Postavení... 1998*].

<sup>3</sup>) The women's employment rate by level of education is 22.9% for those with elementary education, 68.4% for those with technical qualifications, 70.7% for high school graduates and 78.5% for university graduates.

come more evident in highly qualified professions and in private business. The socio-economic position of women in this country has however retained its specific structure both in comparison with that of men, and in comparison with EU countries (Table 1). It can be summed up as a high level of employment, with over 90% of women employed, and a high proportion of women (over 80%) working full time. In addition, 46% of working women have completed secondary school, technical or general, although only 10% have a university degree.

Table 1. The Socio-Economic Status of Men and Women in the Czech Republic 1998 and EU 1996 (in %)

	Czech Republic		European Union	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
<i>Employed</i>	67.3	47.3	59.3	38.3
of which: self-employed	11.6	4.0	12.1	5.7
full-time employees	52.7	37.9	44.5	20.3
part-time employees	1.3	4.0	2.7	11.9
helping a family member	0.1	0.4	-	0.3
other*	1.6	1.0	-	0.1
<i>Unemployed</i>	3.6	4.6	11.1	10.7
<i>Not Economically Active</i>	29.1	48.1	29.5	51.1
of which: housewives	0.1	3.9	0.4	19.7
(additional) childcare leave**	0.0	4.2	-	0.9
old-age pensioners	15.6	27.0	18.5	20.9
disabled pensioners				
or for other health reasons	3.8	3.8	1.9	1.1
students	8.6	8.0	8.5	8.3
retraining	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2
others***	1.0	1.5	-	-

\*) In the Czech Republic, employees working outside the civil sector and those who were not working at the time the survey was carried out.

\*\*) In the Czech Republic, extended maternity leave (i.e. beyond the statutory limit), in the EU not specified.

\*\*\*) Categories which cannot be placed in comparable groups (those unable to start work within 14 days, those who do not want or do not need to work, those who do not believe that they could find work, etc.)

Sources: [Zaměstnanost... 1998, 3rd quarter; Equal... 1996]

The problems of women on the labour market today are partly the result of gender segregation on the market, and partly due to the restructuring of the Czech economy. The economic development has not affected the rate of female employment in different branches in the same way, in relation to the percentage of women working, the nature of the branch from the point of view of growth, stability or fall in overall employment, and of demands for qualifications. Women's share in the increasing employment in those branches which are expanding has been lower than their share in the decreasing employment in those branches that are in decline. With respect to job categories there has been a clear shift of the female workforce to more highly qualified professions – somewhat higher than for

men.<sup>4</sup> Women's presence on the labour market is dependent not on their increasing level of qualifications, but rather on the fields in which they tend to work. If the current distribution of men and women by field (including preferred subjects of study) were to continue, women would find increasing difficulties in remaining in the medium-qualified professions in many fields and their chance of attaining more qualified positions with a higher level of education would fall. Success on the labour market will be due rather to a greater orientation towards areas that have traditionally been seen as the province of men and towards newly emerging occupations. This is the responsibility not only of women but rather of all involved parties who are interested in how women make use of their qualifications.

In the survey MW98, 41% of men and women had attained their planned level of education, while 38% of women and 30% of men had not (the others had not had any concrete plans),<sup>5</sup> while 18% of women and 11% of men had been forced to change their plans for reasons unconnected with concrete conditions or academic failure, i.e. principally for family reasons. 14% of these women did not continue their schooling at a higher level, while the remaining 4% failed to complete their course. With respect to education, both available statistics and relevant researches show that conditions are by and large equal for men and women. The percentage of women who fail to reach their desired level of education for other than personal reasons is not significantly higher than for men. The fact that approximately one-third of the adult population would like to have a higher level of education, should however stimulate the creators of the education system to ensure access to education for able people not only in formal terms, but also according to the level and subjects required. The primary need is for a higher regard for further education in this country. Here too, however, simple statistics do not imply that women are lagging behind men. In the sample for MW98, the percentages of men and women with at least some form of further education were almost the same (46% and 44% respectively). In both cases the most common courses were (re)qualification (around 20%) and languages (11% and 9%).

No differences between the sexes were found in the extent to which people utilised the level and field of their education (MW98). Around two-thirds of men and women worked in their field or in a related one, around three-quarters worked at a level appropriate to their qualifications, and only one-tenth of men and women were not utilising their education.<sup>6</sup> Reasons for working outside their field are similar for both sexes. The only difference is that women are slightly more likely to 'sacrifice' choosing a job in their field for the sake of working nearer home (presumably because of their family), while men do so in order to earn more (at least partly for the same reason). As mentioned above, the high percentage of people who work in 'their' field is possible because of the still low demand for flexibility on the part of the labour force, which is to women's advantage.

---

<sup>4</sup>) According to the classification in ISCO88 [*Zaměstnanost...* 1998] the percentage of women in higher categories rose by 3.3%, and that of men by 0.7%.

<sup>5</sup>) Among people up to the age of 30, 42% of men and 38% of women are satisfied with their level of education, and for both genders the percentage of those who would like to attain a higher level of education than they have at present is 32% [*Absolventi...* 1997 survey].

<sup>6</sup>) Even at the beginning of their careers (up to the age of 30) women did not report any greater difficulties in finding work appropriate to their level of education [*Absolventi...* 1997]. 74% of them work in the field they studied or a related one (72% of men).

In view of the recognised differences in the distributions of men and women by education and profession,<sup>7</sup> these findings show the relative stability both of the different educational and professional paths in a gender-segregated labour market [c.f. Čermáková 1995, 1997], and in the lasting stereotypes of men and women's work. While the younger generation is breaking away from these at the present time (in their status and declared professional ambitions, and in timing the start of their career),<sup>8</sup> this is a gradual process and does not always correspond to the needs of the labour market and even less to the demand for equal opportunity.

### **Unemployment and Success on the Labour Market**

Until recently the total unemployment rate for women in the Czech Republic did not reach the level originally expected, but their presence on the labour market does however vary. As in most countries the unemployment rate for women is higher in the long term than it is for men. The percentage of women among people registered at labour offices as looking for work has however fallen from its highest level to date, 60% recorded in September 1996, to 53% in December 1998. As the overall rate of unemployment was low, in the mid-1990s only up to 5% of women were unemployed, although by the middle of 1999 this had risen to 10.9% (7.4% for men).

Women are more likely to stop working for personal or family reasons (22% as opposed to 13% for men). The percentages of men and women losing their job are approximately the same, being 19% for women and 16% for men: for 26% of women and 28% of men this was due to redundancy, for 9% of women and 11% of men for other reasons [*Zaměstnanost...* 1999, 2nd quarter]. The increasing risk of unemployment for women does however reflect gender differences, since for both men and women there is a strong link with lower education and older age (which is accompanied by low qualifications). The younger or more educated generation of women do have problems with returning to work after maternity leave, primarily if their qualifications no longer fit the needs of the labour market. In recent years this has also affected graduates of some schools. The risk of women becoming unemployed is still higher for single mothers with small children or with health problems. For women in rural areas the negative factors tend to accumulate. In comparison with men, women's chances of success on the labour market are reduced if they are looking after family members [Sirovátka 1997: 175], which relatively (often only seemingly) reduces the importance of other handicaps such as the lack of professional experience<sup>9</sup> or belonging to the Roma minority.

Gender differences are not so apparent in a subjective view of employment. In the data from MW98, which are confirmed by other surveys, the number who feel a threat of losing their job is similar for women and men (33% of women and 28% of men). Conditions on the labour market have not reduced the chances of unemployed women (similarly

---

<sup>7</sup>) In simple terms, more women have elementary or secondary education, while more men have technical or university qualifications, although there is little difference in the average level of education.

<sup>8</sup>) Both the age of beginning work and that of starting a family are changing, as is the way of moving from school to work and the effects of these events. There is an increasing differentiation in forms of behaviour, so that gender is gradually losing its significance.

<sup>9</sup>) This does, however, have a significant influence on professional advancement (i.e. performing more demanding or managerial roles).

to men) finding a job in their field, and not forced them to reduce their other demands. These women do not report greater difficulty in finding a job than do men: 7% of women and 4% of men had major difficulties finding their present job and 38% and 37% respectively had some problems. There were, however, differences in the reported circumstances of these difficulties and also in connection with experience with unemployment (Table 2).

#### Professional Career and Job Experience – The Attitudes and Interests of Women

It is assumed that a professional career is not as important an element in women's lives as in men's, although the differences are not great. Surprisingly, however, people feel this difference more here than in neighbouring EU countries. There, an average of 83% of men and 89% of women believe that women place the same importance on having a job as do men [*Equal...* 1996]. A similar (although not identical) question in this country elicited 69% of yes answers from men and 81% from women (as to whether a job has the same importance for women as for men). While in a certain sense there is a more deep-rooted tradition of women working in this country than in most EU countries, for men (and also for one-third of women) there is still a deeply-rooted traditional idea of men and women as having complementary roles.<sup>10</sup>

Table 2. Problems in Looking for Work and Some of the Sources

	Men			Women		
	No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
Has been unemployed						
<i>Had problems (percentage of stated problems in a given group)</i>						
Major	2	8	4	3	19	7
Some	31	54	37	34	49	38
<i>These were due to (percentage of positive answers)</i>						
Age	9	16	11	16	29	20
Whether a man or a women	2	3	2	17	31	21
Lack of assertiveness	14	27	18	13	36	20
Lack of qualifications	17	33	22	19	37	28

Source: Research into the Status of Women and Men in the Czech Republic

This is not, of course, based on an underestimation of women's abilities – over 60% of men believe that women are equally able to be a manager or private entrepreneur as are men (80% of women agree with this). There is, however, a conflict of the 'dual outlook', that men recognise the rights and ability of women to self-realisation outside the home (professional, etc.), but on the other hand they do not wish to 'relieve' them of their domestic roles of women-partner and woman-mother of their children. Nor are women much more consistent in this respect. While women overtly express an interest in some degree of liberation from their 'domestic chains', they protect their irreplaceable position in the family: 84% declare that family and children are more important for women, while 'only' 64% of men say so. This does not prevent women from having professional ambitions (or from working for other reasons), even if this poses many difficulties. The subjective importance of work naturally rises with higher education.

<sup>10</sup>) The opinion that "a man should work and a woman primarily look after the home" was recently expressed by 38% of women and 63% of men [*Postavení...* 1998].

This is further explained by professional expectations and the degree to which they have been met. The most important reason for working (women 69%, men 73%) is decidedly financial, in the sense of “earning one’s own money, being financially independent” (the need for money to meet basic needs was intentionally left out of the alternatives on offer). For women this is followed by self realisation at work (“I enjoy working”) and meeting people (men chose similar alternatives but with a different emphasis). The last of these reasons is particularly important for women (particularly those with a lower level of education), while men place a greater importance on using their qualifications.

Women expressed a slightly negative evaluation of the degree to which the different aspects of their demands from work were satisfied (2.2 to 2.7 on a four-point scale), and this was very similar to (slightly more satisfied) men (2.0 to 2.5) – Table 3. While more highly educated women, however, expressed satisfaction primarily with the opportunity to use their qualifications, the degree of self-realisation and the position they had gained at work, for men a higher level of education increases satisfaction with remuneration and with work-related status. The fact that professional success is less important for women than for men is not purely linked with their orientation towards children and the family. It is also a result of dissatisfaction of certain professional expectations (particularly among less-educated women).

Table 3. Satisfaction with Selected Aspects of Employment  
(Contingency Coefficient)

Aspect of Evaluation	Average Evaluation**		Sex	Degree of Dependence			
	Men	Women		Education		Professional Category	
				Men	Women	Men	Women
Status at work	2.2	2.3	-	-	27	42	38
Opportunities for work satisfaction	2.0	2.2	14*	25*	27	38	37
Level of income	2.4	2.7	19	29	-	43	-
Promotion	2.5	2.7	13*	25*	22*	45	30
Increase of qualifications	2.4	2.5	-	27	26	36	33
Social status	2.3	2.4	-	27	24	42	34
Using qualifications	2.1	2.1	-	-	31	32	35

\*) statistical significance lower than 0.000

\*\*) on a four-point scale where 1 = definitely satisfied and 4 = definitely dissatisfied

Source: Research on the Status of Women and Men in the Czech Republic

Starting a family changes women’s relationship to their job, although not to their profession or to work as such. It limits their ability to devote themselves fully to their work and also increases the importance of remuneration. Single women, on the other hand, (for whom the financial effect is also the most important) place a greater emphasis on using their qualifications and on self realisation at work. They are more willing to do more to gain a higher income, but this is primarily due to the lack of limitations on their activities. The conflict between family and profession is not, of course, always intractable and indeed appears mostly in certain phases of a family’s development, i.e. when looking after small children. In choosing a concrete job, married women and mothers always bear their family function in mind, while for men the financial question is more important, although this may of course be a ‘male’ way of looking after the needs of their family (as the pri-



mary earner). Due to the accepted complementary nature of male and female roles, formal equality becomes a real inequality, although it need not always been seen as such. It is for this reason that many authors criticise the ineffectiveness of those measures to increase equality of opportunity which are limited to questions of employment and do not take their overall social-cultural context into account [e.g. Duncan 1996].

### Participation in Management

The lack of women in management positions is one of the main subjects of equal opportunities policy. It is an area where there are clear gender differences which go against the process of increasing equality of education and equal rights for men and women under law. There has been no real change in the number of women in management since 1989.<sup>11</sup> A more serious finding (MW98) is that this inequality also exists within individual educational groups, including among university graduates, of whom 58% of women have not attained any management function, compared with only 39% of men (the overall figures are 85% of women and 62% of men). This is despite the fact that for women promotion is more dependent on education. Age, on the other hand, plays a minimal role for both men and women. Nor was there any indication that the situation is different according to the branch regardless of the proportion of women working there.

MW98 showed that most people see men and women as equally able to assume a management position (82% of women and 61% of men). Public opinion surveys show that 43% of people would rather work under a man (36% of women and 50% of men), but approximately the same percentage see the gender of their superior as irrelevant (45%, including 47% of women and 42% of men).<sup>12</sup> Women nevertheless report worse prospects in their jobs, principally in terms of promotion<sup>13</sup> (the higher the position, the smaller the chance that a woman will get it), and this is proved in statistics of the percentages of men and women in different positions according to classifications of occupations.

Inequality of participation in decision-making is also due to the different paths to promotion of men and women. Alongside the subjective, socially determined barrier to women's rising to a certain level, there is their dual role (e.g. interruptions in their career and lower efficiency or motivation because of having to look after children or other members of the family). Even though women start from the same position as men they tend only to reach the middle management level in a company (as indeed in any power hierarchy). As well as meaning that women lose out on one of the conditions necessary

---

<sup>11</sup>) According to the survey *Transformace a modernizace* [Transformation and Modernisation] carried out by the Institute of Sociology of Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, in 1988 90% of women and 79% of men had no subordinates at work, while in 1995 the corresponding figures were 89% and 77%, and for those with more than 10 subordinates, the figures were 2% of women and 7% of men in both years [*Transformace...* 1988].

<sup>12</sup>) [“Muži...” 1996]. Women's best management qualities were seen as their thoroughness, their willingness to think things over and their ability to resolve inter-personal problems, while the qualities praised in men were their ability to make decisions, their authority and expertise, and their intelligence.

<sup>13</sup>) Similar results were obtained by the research projects [*Podmínky...* 1994] and [*Ženy...* 1996]. The first found that 22% of working women and 38% of men have people working under them. The corresponding figures from the second project were 22% of women and 34% of men.

for higher social status and prestige, the low percentage of women in decision-making structures has an effect on the broader social context.

### **Women in Private Business**

The percentage of women in the private sector can be taken as one indicator of how much they have gained since November 1989. The percentage of women in private enterprise is relatively high in international terms (see Table 1), with the percentage of working women who were self-employed in 1999 reaching 6.6% of those without employees and 2.2% of entrepreneurs employing other people (the corresponding figures for men were 12.2% and 5.8%). The percentage of self-employed women therefore rose by 2.9 percentage points between 1993 and 1998. Women's interest in private business is still lower than that of men (sociological research puts the percentage of women seriously considering this as about half that of men).<sup>14</sup> A number of reasons for this can be deduced, but have not yet been proven, as for example the link with the different distribution of the sexes by field of work, or women's lesser willingness to take risks in business. The structure of employment by branch of self-employed women more or less corresponds to that of women-employees and to the 'traditional' preferences for subjects of study. Nevertheless, the distribution of self-employed women with employees is largely concentrated into three 'female' areas (retail trade, health and processing industries), where they clearly feel more 'competent'.

Findings on self-employed women indicate the validity of the idea that they have good conditions namely in 'traditional' female fields of work. The MW98 research showed that they have a relatively high level of self-esteem and that they gain greater fulfilment from their work than do women who are employed by others. They are more satisfied with the content and nature of their work, with the degree to which they make use of their abilities and qualifications, with their level of independence and with their income, so are more likely to report that their ideas of their occupation have been met.

Inspired by foreign experience we looked at whether self-employed women have greater difficulties than do men. We questioned how they managed the difficult aspects of business, the support they get from family members, their position in the face of the competition, whether their initial capital was sufficient, and the difficulties they had in obtaining bank loans. No difference between men and women was found in any of these areas, with both groups saying that their greatest difficulties were in financial matters.<sup>15</sup>

### **Legal Aspects of Employment**

It was assumed that the process of democratisation since 1989 would manifest itself also in people's increasing security in the face of the law. The legal system in the Czech Republic has overall a major lack of law enforcement, for which a developed legal knowledge is needed. In questions of the equality of men and women before the law, this lack is to some extent justified by the non-existence of specific 'anti-discrimination' legal norms.

---

<sup>14</sup>) Data from MW98 showed that 7% of men and 3% of women were preparing to start their own business, while 44% of men and 23% of women were thinking about it, although there was, of course, no indication of how seriously. These women are more likely to be highly educated than are the men.

<sup>15</sup>) Women may be more likely to have problems due to their lower income from work, which generally provides the initial capital.

It was however interesting to discover the relevant positions in the field of legal work relations. The expectation of shortcomings in this area and of differences between the sexes were fulfilled. Only 33% of women and 44% of men said they knew their rights under the labour law (mostly, only in part). Men were (by their own reports) considerably better in this, perhaps because they are more likely to move to exert their rights, while women are more passive. The reasons for the low level of legal knowledge should be sought in the recent past, when it was entirely disregarded, and in the fact that in the face of past experience no clear counter-pole has been created to simplify the enforcement of individual legal rights. There is understandably a complete lack of experience of equal treatment for men and women.

In practice it seems that one-third of women and nearly half of all men had at some time had a serious conflict with their employer (MW98), but in about half of these cases, for both men and women, they did not dare to assert their rights or resigned due to a lack of faith in a successful resolution of the conflict. In the hypothetical case that the employer did not respect the rights of the employee, 30% of both men and women said they would opt for a passive reaction (do nothing because it would be too difficult to enforce their rights, or leave their job). Men would opt rather for resolving their conflicts themselves, while women were undecided or would call on the relevant institution for assistance (26% compared with 22% of men). They (similarly to men) cited as such institutions the management of the company (57%), a lawyer (42%), or a trade union (36%).<sup>16</sup> The preference for informal support is shown by the reliance on support from colleagues (57%). People are more likely to trust in the effectiveness of legal measures to resolve problems in less complicated or better-known situations (e.g. for pregnant women).

The low number of legal conflicts in the field of work cannot be seen as a sign of the legal probity of the behaviour of superiors at work, since it may also indicate a lack of knowledge of legal rights and experience with asserting these. At the same time a certain (to put it mildly) uncertainty in work relations on the part of women makes it easier for employers to abuse them.<sup>17</sup> A certain passivity on the part of women (and of some men) and a demonstrated scepticism can be explained by the absence of examples of successful assertion of the rights of female employees and of the publication of these.

### **Incomes and Remuneration**

Gender inequality in remuneration is one of the aspects that arises most frequently in the opinions of both men and women. The average difference in their incomes has dropped since the 1980s, but is still around 25% and is once again on the rise. This average figure conceals a wide variation due to a whole range of other factors which also affect it. It is necessary to break these down to gain an idea of the actual inequality, but this is a difficult task. The substantial effect of education, for example, is not straightforward (even bearing in mind the different educational distribution of men and women), age is a relatively unimportant factor (the lowest levels of inequality are in the youngest and oldest

---

<sup>16</sup>) The percentages total more than 100 because the various alternatives were questioned independently. The percentage given is the total of all the "Definitely yes" and "Probably yes" answers for each case.

<sup>17</sup>) Examples of such abuse are discovered by chance and the research only showed the degree to which people are aware of such a danger.

cohorts), but inequality by sector is more marked (in state-run companies women receive over 80% of the income of men, while in foreign companies they have less than 60%). The range of incomes given by the basic indicators [*Mikrocensus* 1996] is similar for both the male and female samples, i.e. non-existent for age (for both  $\eta^2 = 0.01$ ), does not differ by category of employee (ISCO88,  $\eta^2 = 0.27$  for women, 0.25 for men), and only slightly by education (women 0.25, men 0.20) and economic branch (women 0.11, men 0.07).

Comparing the income distribution for each sex separately, there is a surprising similarity according both to education and to category of employee. The basic difference must therefore lie in the fact that men's incomes are 'set' about 30% higher than for women. The total range of average incomes (the difference between science graduates and people who did not complete primary school) is less for women than for men. This is also borne out by greater differentiation by education for men, while for women the financial effect of higher education is less, despite its greater importance for their advancement.

The highest incomes among women are generally in the same fields as for men. The income difference by field does however conceal an "internal" distribution of jobs of men and women (principally their role in management), linked with their different distribution of qualifications. The data from the *Mikrocensus 1996* (Tables 4 and 5) show that the different educational level between men and women definitely contributes to the inequality of their incomes, while average education provides only a certain indication (the differences between various educational levels are not the same). Income differences are greater in branches and occupational groups where the educational level of women is markedly lower than that of men, while when the differences in the level of education are smaller or indeed women's level is higher than that of men, income inequality by sex is reduced. The link is not conclusive since there are some fields in which the differences in income are considerable but those in education slight, or vice versa (see Table 5).

There are two reasons for the above-average income differences in certain fields where there is a preponderance of women, which signal a greater inequality in education between men and women. The first is that there are also inequalities in the positions held, with a higher percentage of the men in those fields holding management positions. Secondly, some of these fields have a majority of relatively low-qualified manual jobs, in which women's work receives less financial recognition than that of men (the difference among people with technical qualifications is 42%). The idea that the low level of remuneration for women (and men?) in certain fields is due to the preponderance of women in them was, however, only partially supported by the data from the *Mikrocensus* [see Kuchařová and Zamykalová 1998: 34].

A more detailed explanation of income differences between men and women requires information on the already mentioned differentiation by position within the ownership sector (according to the *Mikrocensus 1996*). The highest position on the income ladder for men and women is held by those working in their own (non-agricultural) business, where men's income is 57% more than the average and women's is 34%. This group does, however, also include the greatest differences between women and men (the average income of women is only 58% of men's). The lowest incomes for both groups are in agricultural co-operatives, but women's average income there is 76% of that of men. Comparing employees with self-employed people does present certain methodo-





logical problems. Bearing in mind the inexactitudes resulting from these, self-employed women with employees earn 130% more than the average annual income for all women. Self-employed women without employees earn only 5% more than this average income.<sup>18</sup> As the difference between the incomes of men and women running businesses with employees is considerably less than that difference between the incomes of male and female employees, the differences shown for men are lower – 83% in the case of businessmen and zero for self-employed persons.

Differences in the incomes of men and women are relatively high and are changing only gradually. It is not, however, possible to show to what extent this is discrimination in that the inequality is due to gender, without collecting sufficient individual cases of demonstrable discrimination or applying tested criteria for judging equal pay for work of equal value. The salary differences found can largely be explained by objective factors, i.e. by differences in qualifications, position at work and by women's careers being interrupted for children. It is very difficult to prove subjective factors (the unwillingness to place the same value on men and women doing work of the same value). In these areas women are paying for the fact that their careers are more affected by family responsibilities. They are also paying for the fact that this is (more or less consciously) accepted even in women's educational and professional aspirations.

#### **Attitudes to Discrimination at Work**

While the whole population, although particularly women, are apparently conscious of a degree of inequality (and even discrimination) in questions relating to the relative status of men and women, there is little difference between men's and women's evaluation of specific aspects of their own professional experience – self realisation, working conditions, dealings with superiors, etc. (in MW98, among others). Certain differences in attitudes can, however, be identified relating to those aspects of work where women are most liable to feel unequal with men – remuneration, promotion, participation in management, and somewhat less in self-realisation and independence.

To compare discrimination by sex with other forms of inequality we asked (MW98) what influences employers' decisions on remuneration and promotion, and gave gender as one possible factor (Table 6). The lack of any difference between men's and women's responses is particularly interesting, with both seeing the fact of whether an employee is a man or a woman as the least important. This in itself does not disprove the possibility that their work is valued differently. The factors that were considered most important – performance, experience and ability to work flexible hours according to the needs of the job – could (particularly in the case of the second and third of these) be the very ones where men and women differ most, independent of individual cases. In this case it is possible to talk of hidden discrimination (in concrete instances).

One-fifth of men and two-fifths of women are critical of gender inequalities at work, and in both cases they see a need for changes in women's favour. Measures to right such inequalities are supported by 57% of women and 40% of men, while 37% of women and 16% of men feel a lack of these. In other words, among those who support such measures the majority of men, but not women, consider that they are already sufficient.

---

<sup>18</sup>) In both cases, self-employed women working in agriculture are excluded, as the number of such people is so small that there must be some doubt as to how valid and representative the figures about them are.

23% of women and 37% of men reject such measures (mostly because they believe that both groups have equal rights today and that this is how it should be, while current measures in favour of women are condemned by 6% of men and 2% of women).

Table 6. Influence of Selected Factors on Remuneration prospects and Promotion Opportunities – Opinions of Men and Women\*

Factor	Remuneration		Promotion	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Performance and quality of work	1.6	1.9	1.8	2.0
Level of education	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.4
Experience	1.9	2.1	1.8	2.0
Age	3.0	3.0	2.8	2.8
Sex	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.2
Connections, relation with superior	2.8	2.9	2.6	2.7
Seniority in the organisation	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Willing to work irregular hours	2.0	2.3	-	-

\*) Average assessment of importance on a four-point scale from 1 = very important to 4 = not at all.

Source: Research on the status of men and women in the Czech Republic.

A telling example of the limited sensitivity to gender questions are the more 'conservative' opinions on discrimination in job advertisements. Advertisements which state requirements relating to the age or sex of applicants are condemned by only 6% of men and women, while 54% of men and 31% of women expressed a positive opinion, and a further 26% and 41% respectively thought they were justified in some cases. In this question it is clear that, regardless of discussions 'on the European level', a sense of what is right is combined with a degree of acceptance of gender segmentation of the labour market, which offered certain advantages for both men and women in the past. Growing competition on the labour market will doubtless lead to modifications of such views.

Such attitudes show the conflicting approaches to discrimination (not only by sex) in this society. A sense of equal rights is clear in sensitive reactions to those instances in which inequalities between men and women are obviously unfounded. In other cases they are generally seen as natural, which does not mean that they cannot be changed. Differences in opinions on these questions cut across all other types of social divisions and seem to boil down to differences between the opinions of men and women.

### Conclusion

While over recent decades there has been great progress towards equal conditions for men and women in the work arena, a number of discrepancies still remain. The necessary legislative measures have been taken, questions relating to education have been largely resolved, but there are still many aspects where inequalities still exist. These can be traced back to the biologically, psychologically and socially conditioned division of work between men and women, to deep-rooted views on the complementary nature of men's and women's roles, and to the difficulty of implementing legally and morally recognised rights in everyday life. In this country, questions of women's position at work and on the labour market arouse less interest than in developed countries, but this does not reflect the



real extent of gender divisions on the labour market or how far women achieve their professional aspirations. Nor does it reflect the growing importance of such questions.

There is certainly some interest in overcoming inequalities in the positions of men and women, but they are not generally seen as (conscious) discrimination. For this reason real change cannot be expected if equal opportunities policies are limited to the working arena, without setting long-term goals in the wider social and cultural context.

*Translated by April Retter*

VĚRA KUCHAROVÁ has been a senior researcher at the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs since 1991. Her specialisation concerns social problems of family, women's issues, social exclusion and social policy. She was a member of teams preparing national reports of the Czech Republic for the Beijing Conference on Women, for CEDAW and for MONEE project/UNICEF. Recently (1999) she published as a co-author a study entitled The Social and Economic Conditions of the Young Generation's Family Behaviour in the Czech Republic.

### References

- Absolventi škol* [Graduates] 1997. MŠMT and Universitas, research database.
- Čermáková, M. 1995. "Gender, společnost, pracovní trh" [Gender, Society and the Labour Market]. *Sociologický časopis* 31: 7-24.
- Čermáková, M. 1997. "Postavení žen na trhu práce" [Women's Position on the Labour Market]. *Sociologický časopis* 33: 389-404.
- Duncan, S. 1996. "Obstacles to a Successful Equal Opportunities Policy in the European Union." *The European Journal of Women Studies* 3: 3-399.
- Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in Europe?* 1996. EC: Eurobarometer.
- Kuchařová, V., L. Zamykalová 1998. *Aktuální otázky postavení žen v ČR* [Questions on the Status of Women in the Czech Republic Today]. Praha: VÚPSV.
- Mikrocensus* 1996. Database.
- "Muži a ženy v řídicích funkcích" [Men and Women in Management Positions] 1996. *Informace IVVM* 96-10.
- Mzdová diferenciace zaměstnanců* [Earnings Differentials among Employees] 1997. Praha: ČSÚ.
- Podmínky zaměstnanosti, nejistoty pracovního trhu a pracovní motivace* [Conditions of Employment, Uncertainty of the Labour Market and Work Motivation] 1994. Praha: ISS FSV UK.
- Postavení žen a mužů v ČR 1998* [The Positions of Women and Men in the Czech Republic 1998]. VÚPSV, research database.
- Sirovátka, T. 1997. "Sociální a ekonomické faktory marginalizace na pracovním trhu" [Social and Economic Factors of Marginalisation on the Labour Market]. *Sociologický časopis* 33: 169-188.
- Šanderová, J. 1998. "Co určuje postavení žen v stratifikačním systému?" [What Determines Women's Position in the Stratification System?]. In *Česká rodina v transformaci – Stratifikace, dělba rolí a hodnotové orientace* [The Czech Family in the Throes of Transformation – Stratification, the Division of Work and Value Orientations], ed. by M. Tuček et al. Praha: SoÚ AV ČR.
- Transformace a modernizace* [Transformation and Modernisation] 1988. Praha: SoÚ AV ČR.
- Zaměstnanost a nezaměstnanost v ČR podle výsledků VSPS* [Employment and Unemployment in the Czech Republic according to the Results of the VSPS]. 1998, 1999. Praha: ČSÚ.
- Ženy a muži na trhu práce* [Women and Men on the Labour Market] 1996. Praha: SoÚ AV ČR.